

## Cancer Research UK Policy Statement on International Tobacco Control and the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

### The Problem : the global tobacco pandemic

Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of cancer worldwide<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, as the world's largest independent organisation dedicated to cancer research, Cancer Research UK sees tobacco control as a key aspect of its prevention work, both in the UK and internationally.

Tobacco is a global problem: The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that there are currently 5.4 million deaths every year due to tobacco use. Unchecked, this figure is set to rise to more than 8 million per year by 2030 if current smoking rates persist. During the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, tobacco could kill one billion people<sup>2</sup>.

It is estimated that over 80% of smokers are male. Being born male is currently the single greatest predictor of tobacco use<sup>3</sup>. However, the pandemic is now shifting to include more women as the tobacco industry actively targets this group. Tobacco companies are also shifting their focus from high-income nations to low and middle-income countries, as it becomes increasingly difficult for them to manoeuvre in markets where tobacco control measures are in place.

Rates of quitting in western countries are thus being offset by rapidly increasing smoking rates in low- and middle-income regions such as East Africa<sup>4</sup>. It is projected that by 2030 more than 80% of the world's tobacco-related deaths will be in low- and middle-income regions<sup>2</sup>.

### The Solution : the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)

The FCTC is the world's first international public health treaty. It was adopted unanimously by the World Health Assembly on 21 May 2003, and became international law on 27 February 2005. It aims to protect present and future generations from the devastating consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke. To date [as of 20 May 2008] 154 countries (representing over 80% of the world's population) have ratified the FCTC. There are a number of countries that have signed, but have not yet ratified the FCTC, including the United States of America.

The FCTC has become one of the most widely embraced treaties in the history of the United Nations. However, the onus will be on national governments to implement the FCTC, its guidelines and protocols, and the effectiveness of the treaty is dependent on the extent of such implementation.

The FCTC contains a number of measures that are designed to promote and protect public health.

---

<sup>1</sup> Peto, R., Lopez, A., Boreham, J., Thun, M., Heath, Jr C. (2006) Mortality from smoking in developed countries 1950-2000.2006. <http://www.ctsu.ox.ac.uk/~tobacco/>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation (2008) WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic 2008: The MPOWER package. Available online: [http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/mpower\\_report\\_full\\_2008.pdf](http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/mpower_report_full_2008.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organisation. Gender and Tobacco. WHO 2005. Available online: [www.who.int/tobacco/research/gender/about/en/print.html](http://www.who.int/tobacco/research/gender/about/en/print.html)

<sup>4</sup> Action on Smoking and Health (2007) British American Tobacco: exporting Misery. Available online: [http://newash.org.uk/files/documents/ASH\\_370.pdf](http://newash.org.uk/files/documents/ASH_370.pdf)

The box below summarises some of the key FCTC provisions.

### Key Provisions of the FCTC

**Protection from exposure to tobacco smoke:** The FCTC recognises that exposure to tobacco smoke has been scientifically proven to cause death, disease and disability. All Parties are required to implement effective measures to protect non-smokers from smoke in public places including workplaces and transport and should aim for a comprehensive approach i.e. no exemptions. (Article 8)

**Labelling:** Clear health warnings (either text or pictures or both) to cover 50% or more (but no less than 30%) of the display area on tobacco product packaging. Forbids the use of misleading descriptors, including 'light', 'mild', or 'low tar'. (Article 11)

**Liability:** The FCTC aims to make tobacco companies more accountable for their behaviour in the past and also to deter them from committing future harm. Parties are asked to consider prosecuting, and where appropriate seeking compensation from tobacco companies for any reprehensible behaviours. (Article 4.5 & 19)

**Illicit Trade:** Proposals include that all tobacco packages should be marked so that their origin and final destination can be traced. (Article 15)

**Regulation of tobacco products:** Tobacco manufacturers must disclose information about the contents and emissions of tobacco products to governments in line with their national legislation. (Articles 9 & 10)

**Taxation:** The FCTC recognises the role that tax and price measures can play in reducing tobacco consumption. Parties are asked to consider public health objectives when imposing tax and price policies on tobacco products. (Article 6)

Countries that have ratified the FCTC have also committed to:

- Protect their policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry (Article 5.3).
- Develop (and fund) national tobacco control strategies and surveillance programmes.
- Develop and promote national tobacco research programmes.
- Develop education programmes (primarily aimed at young people)
- Establish a database of tobacco laws and regulations.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is a series of meetings of all the nations that have ratified the FCTC. The inaugural meeting took place in February 2006 in Geneva. The second session of the COP, held in Bangkok 2007, addressed matters relating to protection from exposure to tobacco smoke, the elimination of illicit trade, cross-border advertising, promotion and sponsorship, as well as packaging and labelling of tobacco products. It agreed to strong guidelines on smokefree legislation and set up working groups to carry forward other areas. The EU offered 2m euros to support development of a protocol on illicit trade. However, further financial support, both for protocol and guideline development, and to assist low- and middle-income countries to implement them, will still be needed.

**Cancer Research UK strongly supports the FCTC as a key way to tackle global tobacco control. We believe that effective implementation of the FCTC by ratifying nations will decisively change the international landscape of tobacco control and will stem the growing tobacco epidemic, protecting future generations.**

Specifically, Cancer Research UK supports article 5.3 of the FCTC (Protection of tobacco control measures from influence by the tobacco industry) as a measure to limit the power of the tobacco industry. Cancer Research UK further believes that nations with increasingly comprehensive tobacco control policies have a responsibility to ensure that the tobacco industry does not have undue influence in low and middle-income nations, and calls upon the UK government and the EU to continue to push for strong FCTC guidelines and protocols.

### International funding initiatives

Cancer Research UK sees the injection of major new funding to international tobacco control from the Bloomberg and Gates Foundations as a timely development. The Bloomberg Foundation funds initiatives to monitor tobacco use and the effectiveness of tobacco control measures, focussing on 15 target countries that account for two-thirds of the world's smokers<sup>5</sup>, including Russia, China, Indonesia, Bangladesh and India. This is a welcome initiative that needs now to be greatly enhanced by other agencies, including bilateral aid agencies, if the promise of the FCTC is to be achieved.

Cancer Research UK welcomes such international funding initiatives in the fight against the global pandemic of tobacco, and calls for further sustained investment in international tobacco control initiatives.

Dr Lee Jong-wook, former Director-General of the World Health Organization, said of the FCTC: "The WHO FCTC negotiations have already unleashed a process that has resulted in visible differences at country level. The success of the WHO FCTC as a tool for public health will depend on the energy and political commitment that we devote to implementing it in countries in the coming years. A successful result will be global public health gains for all."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION SEE:

- For the full text of the FCTC:  
[http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/WHO\\_FCTC\\_english.pdf](http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/WHO_FCTC_english.pdf)
- WHO: <http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/en>
- The Framework Convention Alliance for Tobacco Control (FCA): <http://www.fctc.org>

---

<sup>5</sup> Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Russian Federation, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and Viet Nam